

Osborn (T. C.)

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ANNUAL ADDRESS:

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

OF THE

STATE OF ALABAMA,

AT THE

ANNUAL MEETING AT HUNTSVILLE,

MARCH, 1872.

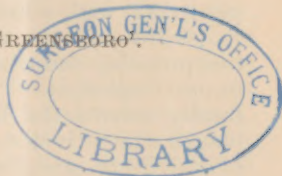
By T. C. OSBORN, M.D.,
Of Greensboro, President of the Association.



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[From the TRANSACTIONS OF THE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION OF THE
STATE OF ALABAMA FOR 1872.]

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

BY THOS. C. OSBORN, M. D., OF GREENSBORO.



Irrespective of all other considerations, the happiness I enjoy in meeting the Association here to-day more than compensates me for all the sacrifices made at home, and for all the hazards of the journey towards this refined and beautiful city.

As the vine must cling to something of firmer texture and stronger growth to insure its attainment of vigor and maturity, so have I, these twelve months past, been engaged in reaching out the tendrils of my susceptible nature far and wide amongst the stout branches of this institution, and the increased vitality and strength which my devotion has thus imbibed is an ample assurance of my determination to cultivate greater assiduity in the interests of my profession.

Thirty years ago I adopted the State of Alabama as the place of my permanent abode. At that early period of my professional career I was intimately familiar with the hospitality and picturesque scenery of this immediate vicinity, and, in an adjoining neighborhood, first began to encourage those observations upon the effects of malaria, which have since grown with my growth, and impressed themselves upon all my footprints as the grand aims and objects of my life. I am now convinced that the poisonous agency of that subtle material is the only one of any consequence which seriously contests our claims to the possession of the healthiest part of the world, and which renders it forbidding as a residence to those who live in colder latitudes and higher elevations above the level of the sea.

Not satisfied, however, with the apparent virulence of malaria in this region, and having reason to believe that there were other places in the State where its intensity was much greater, I removed to the vicinity of those immense marl beds, which are freely intersected with switch cane marshes and river bottom lands, and in which I could have a constant supply of the poison to satisfy all my cravings for information upon the subject.

To-day I return for the first time during my prolonged absence,

and find that those faces and forms which so wonderfully attracted my youthful admiration are no longer seen in the habitations of living men. The Fearn, Erskine, Russell, Bassett, Newman, and many others constituting the splendid galaxy, which glittered brilliantly upon the stage of action in those days, are now reposing quietly in their graves, doomed at last to yield to the deadly shafts from which they had so often protected the community among whom they resided; but their names are still venerated by many yet living, with a feeling nearly akin to that of adoration.

All things seem changed but the mantle of nature, and I am inexpressibly saddened at the view which even that picture offers to my inspection. The wanton ruthlessness of hostile armies has fatally marred the beauty and symmetry of those artistic assemblages which riveted the admiration of the world upon this portion of the State, and but few of the memorials of the past are left untouched by the gothic violence of fraternal warfare.

But "there is life in the old land yet," and it is a source of indescribable pleasure to the remnant of us who are still able to revisit those scenes of former grandeur that we may turn our aged eyes fondly and hopefully to the stalwart manhood which ennobles the present generation, pleading with wistful glances that they may emulate the virtues of their fathers, and remember the lessons of the past, only that they can better avoid the temptations which will assuredly beset the future.

If there were any doubts as to the wisdom of the provision which makes this Association migratory in its sessions, it would seem to be only necessary to point attention to the many new faces annually assembled as a convincing proof of the utility and expediency of the measure, and the mutual benefit conferred by bringing into active coöperation all those talented members of the profession who are timidly averse to taking leading parts, disinclined to long journeys from home, or, for various other reasons, are obliged, however repugnant it may be to their feelings, to remain away from the duties and enjoyments of our annual meetings. In moving from place to place in the State an acceptable service is performed to a large class of our medical brethren, and elicits in return all the ardor and congeniality with which each one is so abundantly endowed.

It is mainly to absence and isolation that is due the encouragement, if not the engendering, of the widespread apathy and indifference to the ethics and advancement of the profession which is so proverbial of the fraternity; whilst, on the other hand, frequent intercourse and mutual deference are promotive of respect and esteem, and is the sure means of fostering a taste for increased culture and familiarity with the duties we owe to the century in which we live.

You need not be told that it is the business of each century to scrutinize rigidly the inheritance it has received from preceding

centuries, and to reject everything which is unphilosophical, immature, and worthless. But I may insist that it is only in the actual performance of this obligation that we naturally come to despise pretension and ceremony, and learn to conform rather to the spirit than the letter of the law requiring the thorough investigation of all subjects confided to our care, for the benefit of centuries yet to follow in the train.

The objects anticipated by the founders and friends of this Association are in strict accordance with the principles here enunciated, and it is therefore a cause for congratulation to its earlier members that the present session has fallen upon this intellectual portion of the State. For, as the man who desires to build a durable and magnificent residence calls to his aid the best topographers, architects and artists within reach, that he may have the benefit of their advice and assistance in the selection of the site, the symmetry and comfort of the superstructure, the style and finish most appropriate to its surroundings, and every other matter pertaining to its completion and endowment, so have we, in like manner, chosen this occasion to confer with you on subjects of vital interest to the honor and perpetuity of the profession in the State.

"Come up now, and let us reason together."

Like the colors of the sunbeam in the spectrum, in which there are a few strong lines standing out distinctly and beautifully to the view, yet the keenest eye fails to detect any marked separation between them, owing to the delicate shadings which so perfectly merges them together in the group; so are we, in a similar way, completely identified and actuated in feelings and interests throughout all sections of the country. And to be thus identified in the pursuit of a common object, it is both becoming and requisite that we should be firmly cemented by a common bond of brotherhood.

Step by step we find it incumbent upon us to encounter and remove the obstructions which have been thrown across our highway, either by the negligence and incompetency of those who aspire to guide us, or by the ignorance and thoughtlessness of the people, who appear to be ever ready to pit against us any and all kinds of quackery in their power to commend.

It is necessary, therefore, that we should rally the wisdom and strength of our forces, restore order and harmony in our serried ranks, cast away every fear of ultimate failure, and present an unbroken front to all the hosts of opposition, threatening to delay our orderly progression.

There are, it is estimated, fifteen hundred physicians in the State of Alabama. To these the doors of this Association are always open, and for them our legislation is imperatively necessary for the purpose of securing harmony and concert of action. And when we have obtained the key to that desirable efficiency, it will be by no means difficult to press as one man upon any given point—whether

it be in reference to literary observations, the regulation of ethics, or as influential citizens desiring redress of grievances at the hands of government. Our collective strength will be more seriously felt in the undertaking, and the ends to be accomplished will be rendered far more easy than by any other method we can possibly adopt.

It is painfully true that we are living under a State government which was the first, and for a long time the only one, to legalize the most arrant quackery; and it is also distressingly evident that its legislation is now reposing in the hands of a venal and corrupt majority of representatives; but what of that! Are we destitute of those resources of which every honest citizen is known to be possessed? Are we deficient in the popular influence necessary to secure the election of upright and sensible men to the Legislature of the State? Assuredly we are not. It is rare indeed that, as a body, we solicit anything at the hands of government; and on that score, if on no other, it would seem but reasonable that our petitions should be readily granted. Instead of this, however, we are at this moment suffering from a cruel disappointment in reference to our petition to the House of Representatives asking protection to our interests against former unjust legislation. That petition was signed by several hundred names, as respectable as any others in the State.

Now, the only reasonable construction that can be legitimately placed upon such a failure is, however we may try to disguise the fact, that there is but little vitality in the spirit which ought to animate us in every enterprise we may feel called upon to engage. It is neither necessary nor proper that the rights we hold in common with other citizens should be purchased at the price of dishonor. The position we occupy in society peremptorily forbids a leaning to such a course of procedure; and, which is of still greater consequence, our individual conscientiousness inspires an utter abhorrence for it when practiced, as it often is, by others. Do you ask, "How, then, shall we proceed in obtaining the rights we claim before the law"? The answer is plain and unequivocal. It is only necessary that this institution, which is yet in its infancy, but auspiciously inaugurated, should be made to embrace every physician of reputable standing in the State, and animation enough to concentrate the power it is required to have impressed upon the objects we may have in pursuit. In other words, to use a popular expression, let us become a "ring," and place each member in the kind of harness best fitted to the duties he may be called upon to perform.

I do not mean that we should prostitute our Association to the level of those venal companies whose sole power consists in their monied ability to accomplish corruptly the ends they have in view, nor do I entertain a fear that such a miserable construction will be placed upon my language; but as I have naturally drifted upon the subject in illustration of the utility and efficiency of closely organized corporations, I will take the liberty of adding that we can very

properly avail ourselves of the advantages exemplified in the success of other institutions far less noble than the one we are here representing. It is simply *esprit du corps* that we are greatly needing, and until *that* feeling is obtained we shall signally fail in all our undertakings.

More especially is its great importance strikingly apparent at this time in the efforts necessary to push through the next session of the State Legislature the bill recently introduced granting us a lien next to that of the landlord for services to sick tenants and laborers, and to repeal a section of the revised code in relation to certain exemptions of property from legal execution and sale, in payment of just debts.

I cannot frame my language too strong in commending this matter to your consideration, and am quite ready to enter with you into a solemn pledge to persevere unflinchingly, leaving no resource untried that is at all likely to crown our efforts with ultimate success.

It may be well questioned whether landlords should be entitled to the class legislation which they now enjoy, and there is but little doubt in my mind that the act granting them a special lien upon the products of the farm was a law of their own making.

It is true the precedent is well established and prevails in all countries, having been handed down from feudal times, and continued upon the statutes of this republican form of government as one of the tyrannies of a barbarian age. But this fact does not, in my estimation, prove either its justice or propriety any more than did the laws against witchcraft, which so recently disgraced the annals of some of the New England States. The land owner is risking no more in renting his premises than you are risking in your services to his tenant, nor more than the mechanic and farm laborer in work done for the renter of the land. The difference is merely in the kind of capital invested—in his case it is land, in yours it is brains. And whilst, on the one hand, you are continually wearing away, with but few years at most to remain upon the earth, he is, on the other hand, in possession of a fixed investment in the land, which is susceptible of continual improvement, and increases in value in direct proportion to the increase of population. Where, then, are the reasons for perpetuating this gross fraud upon your rights?

I repeat, it is clearly my conviction that landlords are themselves the legislators who frame and impose this unjust law upon the people, and that it is one part of our duty as citizens to canvass the injustice of its bearings for our own benefit, as well as for the good of the public at large. That land owners are exceedingly grasping in their contracts is proved by the every day occurrence of their requiring personal security, in addition to the lien they are aware of holding upon the products of the farm. This want of liberality on their part may be safely urged as a reason against the lien, on the ground that it should place them on an equality in the collection of debts, with others not so favored by legal enactments.

As to the exemptions of property from process of law, to which we are asking the attention of the Legislature, I can with much truth affirm that, in the long run, such legislation is exceedingly unwise, if not positively destructive to the principles of justice between man and man. Communities of men are of much the same nature as colonies of bees: protect them, and they will very soon decline to protect themselves; feed them, and the moment you stop your supplies they will either starve or begin to depredate upon their nearest neighbors. It is therefore a criminal mistake in our law makers to exempt any species of property, real or personal, from execution in the collection of honest and just debts. The moment a law is enacted for such purposes, the occasion is seized upon with infamous avidity by a large class of debtors to play hide and seek with their creditors all the rest of their lives. It is worse than vain, it is ruinous to "lay the flattering unction to our souls" that, in a few remarkable exceptions, a real beneficence has been conferred upon worthy individuals by the passage of such laws; for those very exceptions only serve to show in glaring colors the culpable cupidity of human nature, as observed in their general application.

In close connection with the foregoing remarks, I am permitted the privilege of bringing to your attention the excellent scheme of my esteemed friend, Dr. Wm. Desprez, who is about to organize and set in motion a "*Benevolent Aid Society*," on the plan of a life insurance company, solely for the use and benefit of the widows and orphans of physicians dying in the State of Alabama. To obtain its inestimable privileges it is requisite that an ample sufficiency of funds should be secured by legitimate means, and for this purpose the scheme devises that each applicant shall contribute an annual assessment, to be paid in semi-annual instalments of money into the treasury; the sum to be subject to certain contingencies, such as the age and health of the applicant. None, however, as I understand it, are to be rejected on account of either of these conditions. A certificate of membership is then issued, and although the holder should subsequently remove to another State, and die there, his association continues to exist, and his family shares its benefits in annual payments, the same as if there had been no removal.

No one will presume to deny that it is wise, as well as prudent, to avail ourselves of all the chances within reach to secure a comfortable subsistence for the frail and tender members of our families; it is impossible to over-estimate the beneficent tendencies of such a plan as we are now discussing; and I am conscientious in my belief that it is our bounden duty to connect ourselves individually with the advantages proposed, even though our worldly circumstances and prospects were of such a character as to preclude the probability of our families needing them after we have "shuffled off this mortal coil." There is a delicious consolation in the reflection that we have helped to secure the success of a truly benevolent enterprise, through the means of which some indigent and friendless

orphan shall be made certain of a support until he is able to strike out in the cheerless world upon his own footing; and the thought is none the less solacing when we become assured that the ties binding the beneficiary to us are due to a sense of fraternal relationship. And but for the disintegrating tendencies of all large and voluntary corporations, the saddening feelings many of us have lately experienced on the question of endorsements, and the fact that the scheme would be benefitted but little by the connection, I would cordially commend its adoption as a part of the business of the Association. As it is, I am free to say, it commends itself to the humane sentiments of every physician in the State, and speaks well for the head and heart of its distinguished originator.

Among the legislative duties requiring a part of your serious attention, there is not one which claims a higher degree of importance than the *subject of medical education*. It is, however, so old and hackneyed, so battered and bruised, so threadbare, tattered and torn in the handlings it has received from its friends and its foes, and withal so little improved in its appearance by the attrition of opposing forces, that I can hardly find it in my heart to disturb the fretful moroseness into which it is threatened to be submerged. And yet, I am well persuaded that it comes directly within the province of medical legislation. The only question in my mind upon the subject is as to the places least sensitive and sore, on which I can lay my hand without the probability of arousing the lingering feuds that have glutted themselves upon its vitals all through the century now rapidly passing away.

It cannot be a matter of much astonishment to the historian that our profession, which, like a blazing meteor in the gloom of midnight, has for thousands of years challenged the gaze of an admiring world; but which, bursting into glittering scintillations and falling down at the feet of its beholders, remains no longer an object of superstitious veneration, because it is no longer the concentrated fusion of those high and holy aspirations which actuated the teachings of its earlier disciples and devotees.

Of one thing there is, in my estimation, but little ground for the footing of a doubt. The reckless competition existing between the numerous universities and colleges, the liberal tendencies of the day in opening doors to the lowest bidders, and the uncalled for and wasteful dissemination of the honors and dignities of the profession, are admirably calculated to defeat the progress of advancement, excepting that only which has a pernicious and degrading inclination.

In many instances it will have the same signification as "casting pearls before swine"; in others, the scandalous elevation of incompetent teachers; and everywhere the number of medical schools will be greatly multiplied, whilst swarms of doctors of medicine will issue from their doors, spread themselves broadcast over the country, and scuffle for practice by the example of underbidding learned at the apron strings of venerated Alma Mater.

Aware, as I am, that there should always be a given share of modesty in speculations on this subject, and confident it is quite impossible to arrest the tidal wave on which we are drifting, I must nevertheless insist that there is no certainty whatever that the picture here presented is overdrawn, or painted in inappropriate colors. It is but recently that I was told with masterly emphasis, by a member holding a high position in the profession, "that this question of college fees is a dead question, and can never more be even galvanized into the appearance of life." Now, I beg the liberty of saying, with due deference to the member, that it is extremely difficult to many of us to realize the truth of the assertion. But if it *should prove to be true*, it would seem to be only in keeping with the tendencies of human nature, that the profession in this State—the only one so far where the question is thus considered—should be entitled to a liberal share of the honor due to the singular discovery, and should hasten to improve upon the charitable example by abolishing all fees for services rendered to the sick, lest some other outside humanitarian snatch the coveted glory from their mercenary brows. *Where will this thing end?* The question is a momentous one, and well worthy your earnest consideration, as it involves the problem of meat and bread to those who expect to continue the practice of medicine for a livelihood.

I cannot conceive how the subject is to be ended. The idea of adopting a temporizing policy is simply an artifice too despicable to be taken into the question. And the fear of damaging consequences to the peace and harmony of the Medical Association of the State is an invidious reflection upon the courage and integrity of the members who compose it. To neither am I at all willing to concede a particle of my belief.

There is one branch of medical education, a very important one at that, which I can realize as entirely practicable, if we will only consent to pledge ourselves firmly in adhering to its mandates. I refer to the *reception of students in our private offices*. In that department we have the unequivocal prerogative to select from amongst the number of applicants those only whom we know to possess the natural and acquired abilities to become useful and ornamental members of the profession. And we become recreant in the duties we owe as guardians of the public health, dastards in the obligations we are under to the honor and advancement of the science of medicine, and criminal in our panderings to the vanity of those whom we know to be destitute of those noble aptitudes, mental, moral and physical, which aggregate the characteristics of a successful practitioner and devotee to the principles inculcated in the art we profess to teach.

I am not aware of any standard that exists in reference to the admission of private pupils, nor do I know if any general rules will be adopted by which uniformity may be obtained, and all objections removed that seem likely to embarrass the undertaking. But of one thing I am almost persuaded, and that is, unless we seize the

reins, and take the initiative steps ourselves in this direction, there is not the remotest probability that any one of the numerous colleges—whether it belongs to the free ticket class, or otherwise—will ever turn an incompetent student from its doors. The *eclat* of a long list of matriculants is greatly too fascinating to be resisted by the best of them, however large their pretensions may be for the honor and dignity of the profession, and however respectable and well qualified the teachers may be who adorn its splendid lecture rooms.

If, therefore, in your deliberations on this subject, you should concur with me in the propriety of inaugurating a code of regulations in relation to the reception of students in private offices, I would suggest that the most effectual plan for the execution of the rules you may think proper to establish is, to request county and local societies to take the matter in hand and admonish their members that it will be regarded as derogatory to the honor and interests of the profession to teach the art to any one whose preliminary education is deficient, whose morals are questionable, and, in a word, whose aptitudes are inadequate to the duties which will be exacted of him as a custodian of the public health. And, as no man ought to expect that private instruction is a valueless consideration to the preceptor, I would also suggest that a fee should be in every instance exacted, the amount being uniform throughout the boundaries of the State. Office terms ought to be regarded in the same light as apprenticeships, and students should be required to perform all the duties of the general practitioner, for the purpose of familiarizing their hands with these requirements, and also for the purpose of making adepts of them under the critical eyes of the master. If the preceptor imparts conscientiously the full tuition which is expected of him according to the obligations he owes to the profession, the student will become well prepared to enter upon his collegiate career, and no apprehensions need be felt as to his success in practical life, after he has obtained the degree of doctor in medicine. And in consideration of these services, no one will question the propriety of a liberal compensation to the teacher.

I am aware that there are many physicians who never exact payment for office instruction, and I might say in reply that the students of such preceptors were, as a general thing, badly prepared to become ornamental in the ranks of the profession. It is, nevertheless, true that isolated examples are not infrequent where ambitious aspirants climb many steps upon the ladder of fame; but it is a pitiable fact that such instances have to contend with a hundred fold the troubles and difficulties which, under a different method of instruction, would have rendered the ascent a matter of easy and pleasant accomplishment.

In close connection with the subject upon which I have just spoken there is another, bearing such an intimate relationship that I deem it important to touch upon the matter before proceeding

further in the order allotted to this address. I refer to the propriety of establishing *District Medical Societies* in the State.

It is neither expected nor intended that these strong branches of the State Association will in any manner embarrass the settled order of county and local societies, nor come in conflict with the plan of a new constitution, which is to be reported on at an early hour of the present session. I am quite confident that the day is not far distant when district societies will be regarded as the most powerful auxiliaries that can be devised in assisting and perfecting the labors of our State Association, under any form of constitution we may choose to adopt, or as respects the character of our transactions in a literary point of view. Three or four counties having social affinities for each other—for there is an evident affinity between counties, as well as between individuals—can be grouped together in the form of district conventions, hold semi-annual sessions, represented by delegations, and transact much important business, which neither county individually can manage in separate organizations. Especially will this be the case in the regulations proper for equalizing the rate of fees for services rendered to the sick. But this duty, however imperative it may seem to be, is the least in importance on the list. Researches, investigations, and corrected local observations on a much larger scale can be, in this way, better instituted, discussed, and perfected than in county or local societies alone; and, besides, the boundaries of fraternal fellowship will be greatly enlarged; a noble emulation will become diffused amongst the members; and, in a word, all these advantages accruing from honorable convocations will be immeasurably enhanced in the associations of which I am now speaking. I shall be made happy when the proper steps are taken in the inauguration of this measure, because I am well satisfied of the correcting and ennobling influence that will be exerted upon the destiny of the local, county, and State organizations; and will predict that, as a pebble cast into a pool of water disturbs its surface in waves which continually increase in diameter, so, in like manner, will district influences be sensibly impressed upon our State medical literature. Neighboring districts will very soon extend to each other mutual greetings and congratulations, and delegations will be sent out in all directions to confer upon matters of vital interest to the profession at large, as well as upon questions of utility, the bearings of which are restricted to the limits of their own immediate provinces.

It is not objectionable to form them along the different lines of railroad communication, but it is by no means essential that they should be confined to such favored localities: for they can and ought to be so constructed as to embrace an area, the distance in which from one place to any other in the circle will require but a short day's ride in any direction. This can be easily accomplished; and it would be a serious reflection upon the hospitable character of Southern physicians to suppose that any expense would be

incurred in attending the meetings, other than the loss of time, and that is always counterbalanced by the improvement necessarily derived from the intercourse of minds well stored with intellectual resources.

After having in this manner established favorable standpoints for general and special observations, I am prepared to believe you will concur with me in the propriety of appointing a special committee, charged with the duty of reporting, at your next session, *the history of the great malarial epidemics*, which have repeated their visitations at something like regular intervals of time. It does not seem to have occurred to the minds of many medical observers that these visitations invariably linger through a period of three years, and that in all probability, the true reason for the want of punctuality in the dates of their recurrence is due, in a great degree, to the increased density of population, and the steady progress made in agricultural improvements. Three of these epidemics have occurred during my lifetime: that of 1820, 1821, 1822; of 1839, 1840, 1841; and of 1866, 1867, and 1868. The space of time between the first and second periods being nineteen years, and between the second and third twenty-seven years. It may yet become a question of much importance to medical philosophers, to determine the influence which was exerted by the late war upon the protracted delay of the last visitation. My own conviction is that, instead of creating, or even encouraging the overdue return, it is quite probable the appearance of the epidemic was hurried along, and the interval of time much shortened by that disastrous event. I reason that it is in keeping with violent revolutions in human affairs to disturb and disarrange the laws of health, and to invite the prevalence of malarial epidemics; especially as, at such times, no regard is paid to the advancement of agriculture, and the *status* of civilization is either at a stand still or on a fearful retrograding tendency.

Is it at all improbable that the *interval* between the last two epidemics might have extended over a *longer* period, if the war had not occurred? I wish to be distinctly understood as having no reference to those sectional visitations of malarial fevers, which occur here and there every few years, and are strictly due to the variations of heat and moisture, and their attendant consequences; but to those world wide and sweeping epidemics which seem to require years for the accumulation of sufficient virulence to infect all classes of inhabitants, and leave their impressions upon diathesis for a long time after they have disappeared. Indeed, this is another matter in which we are immediately and deeply interested—*the important change in diathesis which every great malarial epidemic invariably imposes upon human constitutions*. The fact itself is not so much in question as the *kind and degree* of the change imposed. I include under the general heading those sweeps of Asiatic Cholera which are quite sure to follow in a few years the train of our home-made epidemics, and are, beyond question, due to a highly intensified condition of malarial poisoning.

There are other matters closely connected with this subject which are susceptible of a partial explanation, but I can do no more in this place than refer to them in a casual manner, in order to direct attention to their regular occurrence. Between these great malarial epidemics, with something like regularity, there occurs, in the Southern States, a wide-spread form of typho-malarial fever—say six or seven years afterwards; and, later still, a malarial dysentery overshadows all interest for the time in every other form of disease. In 1848 the entire country was infected with a serious form of typho-malarial fever; and in 1854 a violent epidemic dysentery prevailed, with great fatality. I mention these occurrences merely to show that there is a definite connection between the great epidemics and the comet like train which follows their appearance in a regular and orderly manner; and to suggest that, since the last epidemic, we may rationally expect the same character of rotations a few years hence.

There would seem to be a peculiar appropriateness in encouraging such investigations in the climate of Alabama, as it is here that we can find the poison in every shade of its intensity, and its varying effects in the production of the different classes of disease afflicting mixed populations.

Who can doubt that, when the nature and origin of malaria is once discovered, the improvements of chemistry will forever remove its presence from the face of the earth!

Until recently, I had allotted a large space in this address to a critical review of "*A Plan of a New Constitution*," which was submitted to this Association at its last session, by Dr. Jerome Cochran, and was referred to a special committee, to be reported on at the present meeting; but fearing its length would occupy an undue share of the time at our disposal, and from assurances received from a majority of the committee that it would be adversely reported upon, I concluded to merely call your attention to the subject, and suggest that, as we have prospered beyond our most sanguine expectations under the old Constitution, there would seem to be but little reason to cast it aside, and hazard our future success with the chances offered by the complex and seemingly impractical character of the new instrument. I will also add that the author has not, in my estimation, correctly discriminated the distinction between fundamental principles and subsequent legislative enactments. Those provisions, for example, which fix definitely the amount of annual assessments upon all classes of memberships, are much too absolute and permanent in their nature for adaptation to the uncertainties and wavering condition of the money market, and should therefore be allotted to the legislative department, in the form of by-laws, so that immediate alterations could be made at any time, to meet emergencies as they appear upon the surface of human affairs.

Of "Article 64," quite as much, *if not a great deal more*, may be said in its condemnation as a fundamental rule, in the organization

of a reputable and scientific association. It smacks too much of the club-room to meet the wants of a medical association, and, if adopted at all, would appear much better in the form of a by-law than as one of the principles of organization. But feeling assured that you will give the scheme a careful and dispassionate examination, I have said enough to convince any one of the truth of my allegation, that it is remiss in appropriate discrimination between fundamental rules and what ought to be included in subsequent legislative enactments.

But let your deliberations on the question of a change of constitutions be what they may, there is no room to doubt the propriety and expediency of a radical change in the method of dispatching business in our annual sessions.

The Association has acquired so much magnitude, although still in its infancy, that we find it impossible, without indecent haste, to compress all its labors into the time usually allotted to its meetings. These labors are also becoming so diversified in character that but little order can be observed in its general arrangement; and, as a natural consequence, many questions of great importance are postponed to a future time, whilst others of lighter bearings are acted upon without that mature deliberation which is due to the respectability of the Association. Valuable papers are turned over to the mercies of the Publishing Committee without a hearing, and others of less importance usurp dignities above the claims to which they are justly entitled. In either class of cases great damage is done to the feelings of all the parties immediately involved, and much of the interest that induced a full attendance is unquestionably and materially destroyed.

I therefore beg the liberty of commending to your attention the propriety of assorting the work of the Association into several "Sections," as is the case in the American Medical Association, which may serve as a guide to your choice in relation to the different departments. And although you may be inclined to deride my selection of the National Association as an example for you to copy after, I can assure you in all seriousness that, whilst I regard the present *status* of that institution as little less than a monstrous advertising machine, it is, nevertheless, an unvarnished truth that its various sections comprise the only real advantages which are at all worthy of imitation and confidence.

And now, gentlemen, having performed the duty assigned me in this time-honored task, it would seem but right that I should tender you my grateful appreciation of the patience and respect which you have so generously accorded to it. Relentless time conveys in its flight many delicious mementoes of the past, and we are apt to treasure them according to the happy events with which they are intimately associated.

In the events of this day, I shall, all the rest of my life, continue looking back in blissful recognition of the faces and incidents, the honors and enjoyments, and the exquisite drapery which an ardent

fancy always leads to the splendor of the assemblage, as only a fervid imagination can picture its brilliancy, magnitude, and distinguishing characteristics!

Sterne tells us we water a flower because we have planted it. This trite aphorism is peculiarly appropriate to my feelings in reference to the growth and perpetuity of our Association. I am contributing in a feeble manner all the energies at my command in the promotion of its interests and ultimate destiny. A large and respectable majority of the physicians of the State are pursuing a similar course of conduct, but with abilities and energies infinitely greater than any in my power to bestow. Its grand aims and objects are being thus watered because they are planted securely in the strongholds of our warmest affections; and it only remains that we should carefully select the germs of our own experience and disseminate them into the hands of the young and vigorous members of the profession, trusting hopefully that no thorns will ever spring up to hazard the peace and harmony with which we have so far been abundantly blessed.

Nor is the aphorism less appropriate to the individual physician in the conscientious discharge of his duties to the sick. He is continually planting in his heart the choicest and most fragrant flowers from an ever-blooming philanthropy, and in watering each flowret the rough asperities of his nature are ever washing away in the stream. It may be that there is no adequate monied compensation returned to him for the wear and tear of mind and body, and that the gaunt forms of neglect and destitution are pressing sorely upon his powers of endurance, but, notwithstanding these formidable and repugnant images, he steadily perseveres in cultivating and irrigating the luxuriant growth with undiminished anxiety, until, with exhausted energy, he comes to look upon death as a dear friend who will open to him the door of eternal recreation and enjoyment.

It is true, he is calculating all through his busy life upon being one day able to retire from labor with a competent support, but these expectations are too often blasted, like the patient expectations of astronomers waiting upon the transit of Venus, which occurs but twice in a century, and when the day arrives for correcting their life long calculations, behold! it is cloudy. His existence may not always be as untroubled as the old Venetian dial plate, the motto on which is, "I number none but cloudless hours"; it is even possible he may have "to brave the rich man's contumely, and the proud man's scorn," owing to a generous negligence in pressing his honest claims against the widow and orphan in distress; but when at last he comes to reap the harvest of his labors—the labor of a well spent life—with the records of his carefully preserved observations on one side, and on the other the grateful appreciation of those who have enjoyed the advantages of his professional skill—like the Roman matron, he can proudly lean upon them and fearlessly exclaim: "These are my jewels"; touch them at your peril!"

